



Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR) Process Guide



**Version
2.0
2009**



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About These Materials



This Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR) Process Guide provides assistance with the PQCR process, drawing from experiences of the first series of PQCRs completed by counties throughout California.

The material in the guide is organized into four sections: *Introduction to the PQCR, Planning the PQCR, Conducting the PQCR, and Post-PQCR Implementation Activities*. Within each section, lessons learned from completed PQCRs are incorporated.

In addition to this guide, other resources available to counties as PQCRs are planned and completed include the following:

- training tools, facilitation tools, and supplemental materials to assist counties and Regional Training Academies in developing training for the PQCR process
- tools and sample materials that have been used in completed PQCRs including planning documents, communication materials, and tools to review the cases for different focus areas

This PQCR guide is available on the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) website, <http://www.childsworld.ca.gov>. In addition, all of the above materials are available on the California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) web site, <http://calswec.berkeley.edu/CalSWEC/CCFSR1.html>, and are organized by topic.

Acknowledgments

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) wishes to thank and acknowledge those individuals and organizations that contributed to version 2.0 of the PQCR Guide. CDSS appreciates the leadership of CalSWEC, the coordination of the editing process by Shared Vision Consultants, and the invaluable contributions of County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) representatives, county probation staff, and CDSS Outcomes and Accountability Bureau (CSOAB) staff.

This guide is reflective of the strength of partnership. It is with great anticipation that we look forward to building increased collaboration throughout each phase of the California Child and Family Services Review (C-CFSR) process.

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I. Introduction to this Guide

A. Purpose of the Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR) Process Guide

The purpose of the Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR) Process Guide is to delineate the requirements and outline the format for counties to use for their triennial PQCR as required by California's Child Welfare Services Outcome and Accountability System.

This guide takes the place of the earlier versions of the PQCR Guide and will assist county staff to complete the PQCR in that it:

1. Identifies the requirements of the PQCR and provides instructions.
2. Expands on existing sections, clarifies instructions, and deletes redundant sections. Because of the emphasis on evidence-based and evidence-informed practice, there are new recommendations regarding literature reviews.
3. Adds the new federal and state outcome measures.
4. Provides tools which may be used to facilitate focus groups and interviews.
5. Provides updated CDSS contact information. County consultants responsible for oversight and technical assistance for the C-CFSR process may be contacted by e-mail at chldserv@dss.ca.gov.
6. Defines key terms.

II. The C-CFSR Cycle

A. Overview—Evolution of Continuous Improvement in Child Welfare

In establishing the Redesign philosophy (2000–2003), the Stakeholders Group identified major philosophical shifts from the old system to the new. These shifts include accepting as a primary value the principle that preventing child abuse and supporting families is a cost-effective strategy for protecting children, nurturing families, and maximizing the quality of life for California’s residents.

The practice of prevention, woven into all aspects of the Redesign, builds a proactive system that seeks to avert tragedy before it occurs. After reviewing a variety of prevention strategies, the Redesign workgroup recommended the following:

1. Formalize the roles of Child Welfare Services and partner agencies at the state, local, and neighborhood levels in prevention across the continuum of services and supports.
2. Establish a collaborative prevention model based on public-private partnerships at the state, local, and neighborhood levels with shared investment in outcomes and accountability.
3. Engage community residents, especially parents and other caregivers, in all partnership and prevention activities.
4. Utilize a strength-based, universal approach to prevention that supports all families.
5. Secure support for a collaborative prevention strategy from legislative and executive branches of state and local government and the general public.
6. Develop dedicated, sustained funding that supports a comprehensive range of prevention strategies.

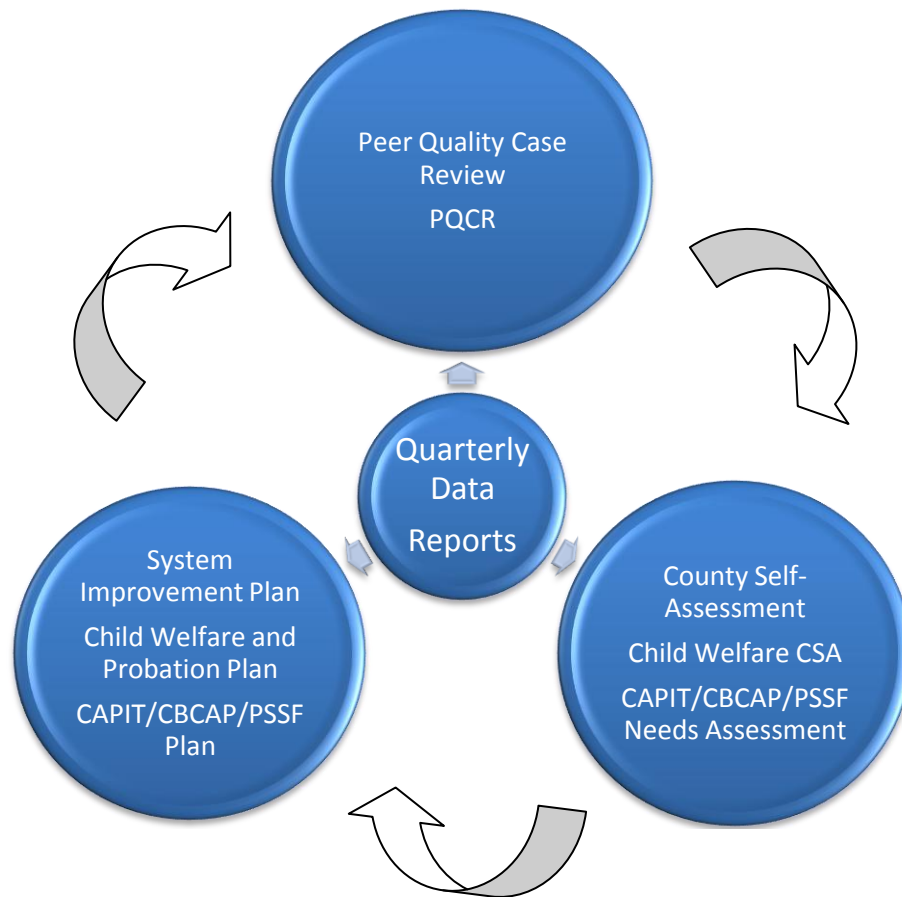
In January 2004, the implementation of Assembly Bill 636 brought a new Child Welfare Services Outcome and Accountability System to California. This new Outcomes and Accountability System, also known as the California Child and Family Services Review (C-CFSR), focuses primarily on measuring outcomes in the areas of safety, permanency, and child and family well-being. By design, the C-CFSR closely follows the federal emphasis on safety, permanency and well-being. The new system operates on a philosophy of continuous quality improvement, interagency partnerships, community involvement, and public reporting of program outcomes. The C-CFSR includes several processes which together provide a comprehensive picture of county child welfare practices (see figure below).

CDSS and CWDA have committed to streamlining the continuum of services provided to children, youth, and families as well as streamlining the C-CFSR process with the Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) Three-Year Plans. Combining these processes administratively provides greater efficiency; while also meeting the individual requirements of each program. By legislative design, each funding stream has its own oversight committee. These oversight committees continue to oversee each funding stream. By integrating the needs assessment of the OCAP Three-Year Plan into the County Self-Assessment (CSA), the county can meet the needs of those oversight committees as well as maximize resources, increase partnerships, and enhance communication.

Previously the CSA focused solely on the analysis of the federal and state outcome measures and systemic factors within the context of the county's demographic profile. The comprehensive CSA expands this examination to include active participation of the county's prevention network partners in the identification of the community's need for prevention and community-based services. In the past, the county was expected to deliver two separate documents: (1) the CSA and (2) the CAPIT/CBCAP/PSSF Three-Year plan, which was based on a needs assessment. The comprehensive CSA streamlines this requirement by integrating the needs assessment from the CAPIT/CBCAP/PSSF Three-Year plan into the CSA.

CDSS consultants in both Children's Services Outcomes & Accountability Bureau (CSOAB) and OCAP are able to assist counties by providing technical assistance, developing model strategies for conducting the CSA, and assisting with data collection tools. The consultants review drafts of the CSA for completeness and provide feedback to the county prior to the CSA going to the Board of Supervisors for approval.

The C-CFSR operates on a philosophy of continuous quality improvement, interagency partnerships, community involvement and public reporting of program outcomes. The principal components of the system include: quarterly data reports published by the CDSS; PQCRs; CSAs; System Improvement Plans (SIP); SIP annual updates; and state technical assistance and monitoring.



B. Features of Each C-CFSR Component

1. Quarterly Outcome and Accountability Data Reports
CDSS issues quarterly data reports which include key safety, permanency and well-being outcomes for each county. These quarterly reports provide summary level federal and state program measures that serve as the basis for the C-CFSR and are used to track state and county performance over time. Data is used to inform and guide both the assessment and planning processes, and is used to analyze policies and procedures. This level of evaluation allows for a systematic assessment of program strengths and limitations in order to improve service delivery. Linking program processes or performance with federal and state outcomes helps staff to evaluate their progress and modify the program or practice as appropriate. Information obtained can be used by program managers to make decisions about future program goals, strategies, and options. In addition, this reporting cycle is consistent with the perspective that data analysis of this type is best viewed as a continuous process as opposed to a one-time activity for the purpose of quality improvement.

2. PQCR

The PQCR is the first component in the cyclical C-CFSR process. The purpose of the PQCR is to learn, through intensive examination of county practice, how to improve child welfare and probation services in a specific focus area. To do so, the PQCR focuses on one specific outcome, incorporates research related to the focus area, analyzes specific practice areas, identifies key patterns of agency strengths and concerns and aligns the findings with research to guide practice improvement. The process uses peers from other counties to promote the exchange of best practice ideas between the host county and peer reviewers. Peer county involvement and the exchange of promising practices also help to illuminate specific practice changes that may advance performance.

a. Timeframes:

In continued partnership and collaboration, an electronic copy of a working draft of the PQCR Report will be e-mailed to the county's CDSS consultant 30 days after the last day of the PQCR, for review and feedback within ten working days.

The PQCR Report is due to CDSS two months after the last day of the PQCR. It should be scanned with signatures and sent electronically in .pdf format to chldserv@dss.ca.gov for posting to the CDSS website. The .pdf file should be one file which includes the following documents in the listed order:

- County cover page
- Cover sheet with signatures
- Table of contents
- Report information
- PQCR Final Tool Templates

b. Mail the original hard copy to:

Bureau Chief
Outcomes & Accountability Bureau
Children & Family Services Division
California Department of Social Services
744 P Street, MS 8-12-91
Sacramento, CA 95814

3. CSA

The CSA is the next process in the cycle. The CSA is driven by a focused analysis of child welfare data. This process also incorporates input from various child welfare constituents and reviews the full scope of child welfare and probation services provided within the county. The CSA is developed every three years by the lead agencies in coordination with their local community and prevention partners.

The CSA includes a multidisciplinary needs assessment to be conducted once every three years and requires Board of Supervisor (BOS) approval.

Along with the qualitative information gleaned from the PQCR and the quantitative information contained in the quarterly data reports, the CSA provides the foundation and context for the development of the county three year SIP.

a. Timeframes:

The Period of Assessment – The period of assessment is from the county's last CSA through the present, with the focus on the present; e.g. if the county's last CSA was an assessment through January 15, 2006, the new CSA will be an assessment from January 15, 2006 through the current due date. The focus of the CSA is on the county's current performance.

In continued partnership and collaboration, an electronic copy of a working draft of the CSA will be provided to the CDSS consultants in the CSOAB and the OCAP at the e-mail addresses below prior to submission to the BOS (no later than two months before the CSA is due to CDSS, i.e., four months from PQCR Report due date). The CDSS consultants will provide feedback and technical assistance to the county within ten working days for any necessary edits and timely submission to the BOS. If edits are necessary, a second draft reflecting the collaborative effort is submitted to CDSS 30 days prior to the CSA final due date.

The final CSA Report is due to CDSS with BOS signatures six months after the PQCR Report due date. It should be scanned with signatures and sent electronically in .pdf format to chldserv@dss.ca.gov and OCAP-PND@dss.ca.gov for posting to the CDSS website. The .pdf file should be one file which includes the following documents in the listed order:

- County cover page
- Cover sheet with signatures
- BOS minutes/resolution
- Table of contents
- Report information
- Attachments

- b. Mail the original hard copy and two copies to:
Bureau Chief
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Sacramento, CA 95814

4. SIP

The SIP is the next step in the cycle. The SIP is a culmination of the first two processes and serves as the operational agreement between the county and the state. It outlines how the county will remodel its system to improve outcomes for children, youth and families. The SIP is developed every three years by the lead agencies in collaboration with their local community and prevention partners. The SIP includes specific milestones, timeframes, and improvement targets and is approved by the BOS and CDSS. The plan is a commitment to specific measurable improvements in performance outcomes that the county will achieve within a defined timeframe including prevention strategies. Counties, in partnership with the state, utilize quarterly data reports to track progress. The process is a continuous cycle as the county systematically attempts to improve outcomes.

a. Timeframes:

The Period of Plan – The period of the SIP is three years from the SIP due date projected forward, e.g., if the SIP is due January 15, 2009, the period of the plan is January 15, 2009 through January 14, 2012.

In continued partnership and collaboration, an electronic copy of a working draft of the SIP will be provided to the CDSS consultants in the CSOAB and the OCAP at the e-mail addresses below prior to submission to the BOS (no later than two months before the SIP is due to CDSS). The CDSS consultants will provide feedback and technical assistance to the county within ten working days for any necessary edits and timely submission to the BOS. If edits are necessary, a second draft reflecting the collaborative effort is submitted to CDSS 30 days prior to the final SIP due date.

The final three-year SIP is due to CDSS with BOS signatures four months after the CSA due date. It should be scanned with signatures and sent electronically in .pdf format to chldserv@dss.ca.gov and OCAP-PND@dss.ca.gov for posting to the

CDSS website. The .pdf file should be one file which includes the following documents in the following order:

- County cover page
- BOS minutes/resolution
- Table of contents
- SIP Narrative
- Part I – CWS/Probation with signatures
- Part II – CAPIT/CBCAP/PSSF with signatures
- Attachments

b. Mail the original hard copy and two copies to:

Bureau Chief
Outcomes & Accountability Bureau
Children & Family Services Division
California Department of Social Services
744 P Street, MS 8-12-91
Sacramento, CA 95814

c. For OCAP administrative purposes, counties must also e-mail an electronic copy of the CAPIT/CBCAP/PSSF expenditure plan in excel format to OCAP-PND@dss.ca.gov.

5. Annual SIP Update

The SIP Update is developed by the county lead agencies in collaboration with their prevention partners. The update is the mechanism that provides stakeholders and CDSS with the status of the county's activities as well as any modifications or additions to Part I - CWS/Probation of the SIP.

a. Timeframes:

A written CWS/Probation SIP Update is due one year from the due date of the three year SIP Report. Counties will submit a SIP Report and one annual update before resuming the PQCR, e.g., for a county with a SIP Report due on January 15, 2009; the written SIP update is due on January 15, 2010. In place of the second written update, a status update will occur via the quarterly contact with the CDSS consultant. This verbal status update will occur one year after the initial update, e.g., January 15, 2011. The PQCR process resumes during the year the verbal SIP Update is due.

In continued partnership and collaboration, an electronic copy of a working draft of the SIP Update will be provided to the CDSS consultant in the CSOAB at the e-mail address below no later than two months before the SIP update is due. The CDSS consultant will provide feedback and technical assistance to the county within ten working days for any necessary edits.

The SIP Update should be scanned with signatures and sent electronically in .pdf format to chldserv@dss.ca.gov for posting on CDSS website. The .pdf file should be one file which includes the following documents in the following order:

- County cover page
- Table of contents
- SIP Narrative
- CWS/Probation Updates
- Attachments

b. Mail the original hard copy and two copies to:

Bureau Chief

Outcomes & Accountability Bureau
Children & Family Services Division
California Department of Social Services
744 P Street, MS 8-12-91
Sacramento, CA 95814

6. CAPIT/CBCAP/PSSF Annual Report

Counties receiving CAPIT/CBCAP/PSSF funds are required to submit an annual report. The state-funded CAPIT and federally-funded CBCAP and PSSF programs all operate on the July 1 through June 30 state fiscal year (SFY) and all funds must be expended during the SFY allocated. The CDSS will provide allocation, claiming and annual reporting information for each of the funding streams annually.

7. State Technical Assistance and Monitoring

CDSS consultants from the CSOAB and from the OCAP - Prevention Network Development (PND) Unit are available to provide technical assistance to counties in the C-CFSR and CAPIT/CBCAP/PSSF processes.

The CSOAB partners with the county to complete all of the activities under the C-CFSR, including: ongoing tracking of county performance outcome indicators, composites, and measures; participating in the PQCR; reviewing the CSA for completeness; and reviewing and approving the SIP. The CDSS consultants provide guidance and technical assistance to counties during each phase of C-CFSR process and ultimately track and report on progress toward measurable goals set by each county SIP.

The OCAP-PND Unit provides guidance in the development, review and approval of the CSA and the Part II - CAPIT/CBCAP/PSSF section of the SIP. The OCAP-PND consultants provide guidance and technical assistance to counties regarding funding of specific programs and/or practices.

a. Timeframe:

The CSOAB staff meet quarterly with each county, either via a telephone call or in person whenever possible, to provide technical assistance with the C-CFSR process, and discuss the quarterly data reports, data trends, and SIP progress.

The OCAP-PND Unit staff are available as needed.

III. Introduction to the PQCR

A. Guiding Principles of the PQCR

The guiding principles below are intended to ground the PQCR in common language and values. They can be used to orient staff and stakeholders to the values and principles that underlie the PQCR and should be referred to throughout the PQCR process.

1. The goal of the child welfare system is to improve outcomes for children and families in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being.
2. The entire community is responsible for child, youth, and family welfare, not just the child welfare agency. The child welfare agency has the primary responsibility to intervene when a child's safety is endangered.
3. To be effective, the child welfare system must embrace the entire continuum of child welfare services, from prevention through after care services.
4. Engagement with consumers and the community is vital to promoting safety, permanency and well-being.
5. Transforming the child welfare system is a process that involves removing traditional barriers within programs, within the child welfare system, and within other systems.

B. Purpose of the PQCR

The purpose of the PQCR is to learn how to improve outcomes for children and families in California through an intensive examination of county child welfare services and probation practices guided by a review of current research literature. The PQCR is not intended to provide more quantitative assessment data, but it should provide an additional layer of contextual, qualitative information about practice. The PQCR creates another mechanism for understanding the child welfare system and youth placed in out-of-home care in the probation system, through a focused examination of an area of practice. The completion of an associated literature review highlighting existing research related to the focus area provides a framework to guide the inquiry into practice. The county should consider choosing a focus area for which they are struggling to improve their performance and want to more clearly identify why this is so. The PQCR recognizes that line and supervisory social work and probation staff have unique knowledge of the system and the families that it serves, and they can shed considerable light on the challenges to improving practice in a particular area. The alignment of the findings with

the research in the focus area provides a guide for practice improvement and may lead to specific strategies for the county to consider in the subsequent SIP.

While quantitative data provides integral, population-based information for assessing performance, the PQCR provides a rich and deep understanding of actual practices in the field. The PQCR brings in outside expertise, such as the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), child welfare, and probation peers from other counties, and community stakeholders, to help illuminate and assess the strengths and needs of county probation and child welfare services delivery and practices guided by current research. The PQCR, along with the CSA, informs the development and revision of the SIP. The PQCR is not intended to be an audit of case practice, but rather an opportunity for every county to benefit from an additional source of information. Moreover, there is much to learn from PQCRs in all counties.

C. Elements of the PQCR

The PQCR planning team (see below for membership and configuration) assures that all of the elements of the PQCR are completed. Elements include the following:

1. Analysis of a variety of data sources to better understand services delivered to children, youth, and their families
2. A review of the literature available in the focus area to provide a foundation of knowledge to guide and inform the PQCR process
3. Case selection and summarization
4. Structured, research informed, case-specific interviews by the peer review team
5. Structured, research informed interviews and/or focus groups with case-carrying social workers/probation officers, supervisors, and/or community partners
6. Debriefing of interviews including full documentation of findings (on a daily basis during the review week, as well as a Final Debrief)
7. Formulation and submission of a PQCR Report that summarizes the findings

As necessary, the review team may examine systemic factors as well as specific practices associated with outcomes.

D. Goals of the PQCR

The goals of the PQCR are:

1. To perform a research guided analysis of practice as it relates to a specific group of cases pertinent to the focus area
2. To identify key patterns of agency strengths and challenges, and arrive at a consensus among interview team members
3. To report interview team findings and recommendations on improving practice in the area of focus for the host county

E. Premises of the PQCR

The premises of the PQCR include the following:

1. The PQCR is a state/county partnership; it is an opportunity to learn about practice in a particular focus area. It is not an audit.
2. The PQCR is an in-depth, research guided, **qualitative** analysis of an outcome area in which the county is experiencing challenges. Child welfare services and probation professionals examine and explore of actual practice.
3. The PQCR uses an interactive process with child welfare and probation staff as part of the qualitative problem/strength analysis.
4. The PQCR is a supportive opportunity for the agency and community to freely and honestly provide their insight and experiences.
5. The PQCR results will be presented in the aggregate and, therefore, results will not be attributed to individual workers.
6. The PQCR process is intended to build the capacity of agency staff through case presentations and examination of practice beliefs and trends.
7. The PQCR process attempts to create a supportive, non-threatening environment that respects social workers and probation officers as the holders of practice wisdom.
8. The PQCR process uses peers from other counties to promote the exchange of best practices and the cross-fertilization of ideas between the host county and peer reviewers.
9. The PQCR process includes a review of the literature to guide the inquiry and to support the alignment of the PQCR findings with current research.

IV. Participants and Roles

A. Key Participants and Suggested Committees

There are several key participants in the PQCR planning and implementation process, including the following, whose roles and responsibilities are outlined below:

1. Host county executive management team
2. PQCR planning team
3. PQCR coordinator
4. Co-chairs (host county child welfare, probation, and CDSS)
5. Regional Training Academy (RTA) staff
6. Neighbor/peer county staff
7. Host county staff (optional)

Note: For smaller counties it is understood that the makeup and number of the committees will vary, because in some counties, the same person fulfills many of the roles mentioned above. The organizational structure of the planning committees should be molded to the uniqueness of each county.

B. Host County Executive Management Team

The host county executive management team, which usually consists of executive leadership such as Chief Probation Officers, Child Welfare Directors, Deputies and/or Managers, and CDSS, begins the planning process to address issues such as:

1. The date of the PQCR event week
2. Suggested areas of focus
3. Selection of PQCR coordinator and co-chairs to lead the PQCR planning team

C. Planning Team Participants

The planning team typically includes the following participants:

1. PQCR co-chairs (host county child Welfare, probation, and CDSS)
2. PQCR coordinator
3. An RTA representative and representatives from peer/neighbor counties depending on logistics and host county preferences
4. Local county managers, supervisors, and line staff
5. In some counties a facilitator/consultant hired by the RTA or county

D. PQCR Co-Chair and Planning Team Responsibilities

A representative from the host county Probation and Child Welfare Services Departments and a CDSS consultant will participate as co-chairs in each county PQCR. The responsibilities of the PQCR co-chairs are to plan and oversee the activities specific to the implementation of the on-site PQCR, including interviews with social workers, probation officers, in some instances supervisors, and the organization of focus groups. The co-chairs are also responsible for the development of the final written report. They lead the planning team and are responsible for assuring that the following activities are completed by the team:

1. Finalize the focus area. The selection of the focus area is very important for both child welfare and probation. Both agencies are encouraged to have early dialogue with CDSS to narrow the selection process.
2. Review the body of research related to the focus area to guide the planning and review process.
3. Develop timeline/action plan, including at least weekly meetings for the last two months of the process.
4. Identify referral/case selection criteria, and oversee the case selection process to assure that it meets the identified criteria.
5. Develop and test case screening selection, interview, and focus group tools.
6. Schedule pre-site conference call(s) with reviewers and all co-chairs.
7. Recruit review teams, which can consist of neighbor/peer county participants and community partners.
8. Assign reviewers to individual teams.
9. Review expectations with reviewers, and oversee the implementation of necessary training for both staff and reviewers (including an

overview of the current literature and those elements found to influence the outcomes in the specific focus area).

10. Identify the staff to be interviewed, assure staff is prepared for the interviews, and ensure that the logistics of the interviews are carefully planned.
11. Arrange for the completion of the case summary prior to the interviews. Consider including SafeMeasures® reports if desired.
12. Plan for and oversee the implementation of interviews and/or focus groups.
13. Establish and implement a plan and basic ground rules related to confidentiality of information.

The co-chairs are also responsible for:

1. Ensuring smooth implementation of the process within the planning team;
2. Consulting and updating management and executive staff on a regular basis;
3. Participating in daily team debriefings;
4. Meeting with executive management team prior to the final debrief (as necessary with the planning team) to update on process and preliminary findings;
5. Participating in the final debrief.

E. PQCR Coordinator Responsibilities

The role of the PQCR coordinator is to prepare necessary planning tools, coordinate staff responsibilities for tasks, and effectively support and facilitate the PQCR planning team through a variety of activities necessary for the PQCR planning, implementation, and post-implementation processes.

Note: Counties may decide that one of the host county planning team co-chairs will serve as the coordinator.

A sample planning tool and timeline can be found at <http://calswec.berkeley.edu/CalSWEC/CCFSR1.html>.

F. Role of CDSS Staff

The CDSS co-chairs the PQCR process with probation and child welfare. The CDSS consultant partners with the county to ensure that the guide is followed and the PQCR remains true to its purpose. The CDSS consultants have expertise in the Child Welfare Services Outcome and Accountability System and bring collective experience gleaned from numerous PQCRs across the state, as well as the Federal Child and Family Services Review. The CDSS/host county partnership is a collaborative process that focuses on practice improvement and exchange of knowledge and skills.

The CDSS consultant also provides technical assistance to counties regarding focus area, case selections, and PQCR guidelines and tools. The co-chairs' responsibilities include the following:

1. General Preparation

In partnership with host county co-chairs (CWS and Probation):

- a. Consulting with County Director and Chief Probation Officer to schedule PQCR
- b. Assisting the county in determining the focus area
- c. Consulting with the county to define logistics for planning phase
- d. Consulting with the county to define team composition
- e. Establishing timelines with the county
- f. Assisting the county in establishing a process for completing case summaries (Children's Research Center is to available develop sample and pre-populated case summaries)
- g. Participating in planning meetings and providing technical assistance on development of final interview tools and questions

2. On-site Review

In partnership with host county co-chairs (CWS and Probation):

- a. Overseeing (with the host county co-chair) the smooth coordination of the process
- b. Available to assist with facilitation of external focus groups
- c. Overseeing (with the host county co-chair) the data collection process, including gathering the tools daily in order to complete the PQCR Final Report
- d. Convening, on a daily basis, all team members to review documentation and discuss the emerging themes/trends (identification of who will facilitate the debrief session should occur during the planning process)

- e. Reaching consensus on findings, program strengths/areas for improvement, and recommendations to present to the host county
 - f. Collection and recording of aggregate data by host county and CDSS
 - g. Co-leading the final day debrief
3. PQCR Report
- In partnership with host county co-chairs (CWS and Probation):
- a. Collecting and reviewing completed tools (not to be attached to PQCR Report)
 - b. Summarizing findings in the aggregate
 - c. Aligning findings with current research (including both strengths and challenges)
 - d. Reviewing drafts, providing technical assistance, and ensuring that the report is complete, properly formatted, and contains the required components etc.
 - e. Assisting the counties in streamlining the process between the PQCR and CSA
 - f. Retaining the PQCR Report on file

G. Role of Host County

The host county works in partnership with CDSS in regards to general preparation, on-site review, and completion of the PQCR Report. Tasks include the following:

- 1. General preparation
 - a. Identify county co-chairs
 - b. Schedule the PQCR event week
 - c. Work with CDSS to select focus area and case selection
 - d. Define the planning team composition
 - e. Review peer counties' performance in specified focus area
 - f. Prepare a county orientation
 - g. Complete a case summary on each selected case
 - h. Define the logistics for the planning phase
 - i. Train social worker staff on the purpose of the PQCR and how to make effective case presentations

- j. Make logistical arrangements for social workers to be interviewed, as well as for the supervisor interviews and/or focus groups

2. On-site review

- a. Co-facilitate the welcome and orientation, setting the tone of partnership
- b. Be available on site during external focus groups to be of assistance, if needed
- c. Oversee the smooth coordination of the process
- d. On a daily basis, convene all planning team members and interview teams to discuss the emerging themes and trends and reach consensus on findings related to focus area, program strengths/areas for improvement, and recommendations to present
- e. Collect and record aggregate data by host county and CDSS
- f. Observe the final debrief

3. Completion of PQCR Report

- a. Solicit feedback from the planning team for inclusion into the draft report
- b. Summarize aggregate findings and align them with current research information in a draft report

After the feedback from the planning team on the PQCR Report, the host county will send a draft of the report to the CDSS consultant 30 days after the PQCR is completed in order to work together to ensure all components are addressed. This allows for increased collaboration and partnership. CDSS will comment on the draft and return to the county within ten business days for final host county director's approval and official submission to CDSS.

Managing the CDSS/Host County Collaboration

The PQCR promotes a partnership between counties and CDSS to assess outcomes. As such, the process should not be viewed as an audit. Differences of opinions will inevitably occur. It is imperative that these disagreements be identified and communicated as quickly as possible for solutions to be found. The chain of command should be utilized, starting at the lowest level and only moving upward if problems can't be resolved at a lower level.

To assist in smooth planning, the co-chairs will agree on the following areas at least 45 days prior to the PQCR. At that time, all major issues related to these areas are expected to have been identified and resolved, and the PQCR is to be implemented based on these agreements.

- Focus area
- Selection of relevant research on the focus area (literature reviews are one source)
- Case selection methodology
- Make-up of the interview teams
- Peer counties invited
- Focus group composition and identification of focus group facilitators
- Roles of co-chairs and planning team staff during the PQCR event week

H. Neighbor/Peer Counties

The PQCR involves participation from the host county Child Welfare Services and Probation agencies, and neighboring or peer counties. Neighbor/peer counties are selected by the host county and may include contiguous or non-contiguous counties. Host counties may identify which counties to use as peers by determining the neighbor/peer counties performance in the focus area, by proximity, and by similarity in size or population. CDSS staff is available to provide assistance.

Peer counties contribute staff as reviewers for the host counties during the PQCR process.

I. Host County Staff

Some counties have expressed an interest in having host county staff participate on the interview teams. Those counties expressed a desire to have host county staff participate in the learning process first hand. They felt it would create more buy-in from staff to support the recommended practice changes if staff were part of the process. They also felt staff was needed to assist peer reviewers to understand local processes.

This should be considered carefully. Host county staff may provide valuable information and context as part of the review team, but their presence on the interview teams may also impact the atmosphere of the review process. As with focus groups, it is essential that peer review teams are a neutral place to share honestly about practice issues related to the review. Additionally, counties are encouraged to engage host county staff in a number of alternative/additional ways.

When the PQCR process was initially piloted, the first round of counties utilized their child welfare social workers/probation officers and/or supervisors on review teams with varied roles. Issues surfaced which created the shift to having neutral interview teams. For example, those issues included: the interviewees felt uncomfortable, reluctant, and had a fear of retaliation; there were union issues, confidentiality issues; and county staff on the review teams felt they needed to defend themselves or their county against comments that were made by the interviewee. Consequently, the majority of the remaining counties opted to engage their social workers, probation officers, and supervisors in other meaningful roles, such as participating in a focus group, participating on the PQCR planning team, or participating as mock interviewees.

To mitigate these issues while still providing counties the freedom to choose whether to have host county staff participate on the interview team, CDSS and CWDA jointly developed the following guidelines to ensure the most effective process without compromising the confidentiality and effectiveness of the interview.

1. Both co-chairs (CDSS and host county) will agree whether to utilize host county child welfare social workers/probation officers and supervisors on interview teams prior to the initial PQCR pre-planning phase (once the host county has designated a co-chair and committee members for the PQCR).
2. Regional Training Academies and/or county contracted consultants must train host county child welfare social workers/probation officers and supervisors utilized on interview teams on their role in the process and how to assure that the atmosphere remains comfortable for interviewees.
3. Once host county team members are trained, Regional Training Academies and/or county contracted consultants will provide the participants' names and the date the training was completed to both co-chairs (CDSS and host county).
4. Prior to the first interviews, the host county and CDSS will agree to a plan of action to address any issues that arise if an interviewee expresses concern or an interview becomes contentious.
5. Where practical, the host county interview participants should be selected from different regions than the interviewee, have no contact or familiarity with the specific case(s), and have no supervisory relationship over the interviewee.
6. The host county participants' role on the interview team will be limited to timekeeper and/or observer.

J. Role of the RTA Staff

RTA staff can be useful in providing another voice in the PQCR process, with their extensive knowledge and experience in working with social workers. RTA staff have also been involved in the regional planning of the PQCR, and are knowledgeable about the Child Welfare Services Outcome and Accountability System. It is helpful to have RTA staff participate on county planning teams to help prepare for the PQCR roll-out. RTA staff need to be viewed as a neutral party in the PQCR process. They are not representing the county or CDSS, but supporting the process as identified by the co-chairs. The role of the RTA should be established early in the process, to aid in communication and collaboration.

The role of RTA staff may include the following:

1. Serving as a planning resource and assisting with facilitation of planning meetings
2. Facilitate the PQCR process on-site the week of the PQCR
3. Helping with the “big picture”
4. Bringing other counties’ experiences with the PQCR process to the table
5. Identifying and providing trainers and facilitators to help with the process
6. Training the review teams and the host county staff participating in the PQCR, and planning and co-facilitating a post-PQCR reflections session (what worked well, what to improve next time, share PQCR Report if available)
7. Helping all participants with the debrief process to further improve the PQCR

Note: In some instances, a county may elect to contract with an independent consultant. The description above serves as a guide for counties in outlining the role of a contracted consultant.

V. Planning the PQCR Process

A. PQCR Process Overview

The following table provides an overview of the PQCR process. Subsequent sections of this guide provide more information for each stage.

Stage	Description
1	Pre-planning/general preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Review current outcomes data, the county's last PQCR Report, CSA, and SIP▪ Identify focus area▪ Review research literature available on the focus area▪ Determine process for referral/case selection and depth of information needed for case summary▪ Identify co-chairs (CWS, Probation, and CDSS) and county PQCR coordinator▪ Establish the PQCR Planning Committee/selecting internal and external members▪ Conduct countywide public relations—information-sharing about the process
2	Planning the PQCR (a sample PQCR planning tool is available at http://calswec.berkeley.edu/CalSWEC/CCFSR1.html). <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Develop/modify PQCR tools▪ Conduct mock interviews and refine tools as needed▪ Select interview teams▪ Schedule interviews and focus groups▪ Plan logistics:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Plan PQCR Orientation for CWS and probation staff– Identify PQCR site location(s), site host(s), and support staff– Coordinate PQCR training (for review teams)– Plan pre-briefing for staff selected as interviewees
3	Conducting the PQCR—Event Week <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Training—Prepare the interview team and discuss the review process▪ Conduct interviews▪ Review cases▪ Convene focus groups▪ Daily debriefs▪ Final debrief—Synthesizing the results of the individual interviews into overall themes and recommendations▪ Meeting with executive management team regarding preliminary findings▪ Peer county sharing (ideas and recommendations)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collection and recording of aggregate data by host county and CDSS ▪ For purposes of confidentiality, the raw data (interview notes) are not provided to the county
4	<p>Post-Implementation Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ County executive management debriefings ▪ PQCR reflections and next steps session ▪ Co-chairs and planning team meet to align PQCR findings with available research and with county practice and to develop strategies for improvement and next steps based on the findings and current research ▪ Prepare the PQCR Report (submit working draft to CDSS 30 days after the PQCR) ▪ Follow up on issues and recommendations from PQCR process ▪ Integrate insights from the PQCR into the CSA and SIP ▪ On-going monitoring and communication

B. Timeframe and Oversight of the Planning Process

As a general note, the overall planning time recommended for the PQCR is six months prior to the date of the review week, allowing the last six to eight weeks for intensive planning and coordination by the PQCR planning team. Timeframes may vary based on size of county.

The PQCR planning team should be established to prepare for the review, with tasks including but not limited to the following:

1. Selecting review team participants
2. Revising and developing review tools
3. Finalizing logistics

The executive management team and the PQCR planning team provide oversight throughout the PQCR planning and implementation process.

A sample planning tool and timeline can be found at <http://calswec.berkeley.edu/CalSWEC/CCFSR1.html>.

C. Pre-planning Activities

Prior to the planning process, the host county executive management team and CDSS should make the following decisions:

1. Identify host county, state, and probation co-chairs
2. Identify members of the planning team
3. Identify research related to the selected focus area
4. Identify peer counties invited to participate
5. Identify the PQCR coordinator
6. Identify and train host county staff participants

The executive management team and CDSS should review the data reports, previous PQCR, CSA, SIP, and SIP Updates to determine:

1. The focus area
2. The number of cases and/or referrals to be selected
3. The purpose of reviewing case files and/or referrals to inform county practices

Probation is urged to have early conversations with CDSS regarding the selection of a focus area. The county CDSS consultant is available for technical assistance to help clarify the PQCR process, review pertinent probation data, and narrow the focus area to obtain rich and useful practice information.

Note: Counties may have several high priority outcome areas that can be explored during the PQCR process; however, only one focus area should be selected.

The following criteria should be considered when determining an area of practice focus:

1. The focus area should be linked to a high-priority outcome, as reflected in the quarterly data reports and may be supplemented by strategies outlined in the most recent SIP Update, which may warrant further exploration through the PQCR. Access to a thorough analysis of the data is required to establish that the high-priority concern is not derived from missing or erroneous data (which could be resolved by data cleanup efforts).
2. The practice focus area should be a priority for the community as well as the county agencies.

3. The focus area should not be an area the county has already analyzed as correctable by specific system modification, such as better enforcement, data entry, etc. The focus should be on *practice*.
4. The focus area should be an area most suitable for an in-depth, qualitative examination of social work application of practice in the field. Therefore, the focus area should be broad enough to have an obtainable sample for referral or case selection.

A literature review is a valuable first step in understanding the factors that influence the outcomes and practices in the focus area. The literature review will also provide guidance as the planning team formulates questions for interviews and focus groups. Including Evidence Based Practice (EBP) in the PQCR process will improve outcomes for children, youth and families. For this purpose, counties should conduct a literature review around the selected PQCR focus area. The information obtained from the literature review will be considered by the PQCR planning team and will guide them in case selection; the formation of the questions for interviews and focus groups; and the analysis of current practice. Sample literature reviews are available at the CDSS website: <http://www.childsworld.ca.gov/PG1356.htm>.

This process will guide the counties to link EBP and current practice, leading to the identification of gaps which may be analyzed in the CSA and become strategies in the SIP.

The cases selected for the PQCR should be related to the focus area. The case selection is driven and supported by the goals and objectives of the PQCR process. Keep in mind the following guidelines when determining a sample:

1. Quantifiable results are not the purpose of the PQCR. Therefore, the sample for the PQCR is not expected to be statistically valid.
2. To accommodate any challenges and limitations inherent in the referral/case selection process, it is suggested that the planning team select more cases than needed. CDSS representatives can assist in the development of an appropriate sample.
3. The critical concerns for sample selection are the caseload size of the focus area and the number of staff available to interview. If the focus area is narrow, it may be difficult to find enough referrals/cases with different social workers, which will limit the transfer of the findings to county practice.
4. The number of cases a team reviews should allow for a balance between the number of cases in that county's focus area population as well as the number of team reviewers available for that county.

5. Consider selecting a sample that would compare cases where the outcomes were achieved and those that were not successful. By doing so, you may be able to identify the practice that made the most impact on the outcome.
6. Counties that do not have staff trained in drawing samples from CWS/CMS may consult with CDSS for technical assistance.

The maximum number of referral/cases to be selected for the PQCR depends on the following four factors:

1. Number of review teams
2. Maximum number of cases that can be reviewed per day by each team, usually no more than four cases per team per day.
3. Number of days available for the review
4. Number of staff available to be interviewed

The following are some other factors that may need to be considered in the selection of the population to be sampled. Please note that the selection should start as early as possible in the process as it takes a considerable amount of time:

1. Has the family been receiving services for an appropriate time for that focus area?
2. Has the assigned worker been working with the families a sufficient amount of time to engage the family?
3. Careful consideration should be given when more than one case per worker is sampled. The goal is to have a wide variety of input. This caution is contingent upon the number of social workers and/or probations officers available in the county whose cases also meet the referral/case selection criteria.
4. Selected families may not want to participate in the process for the county to gather comparative information if the families' desired outcome was not achieved.
5. Has the county determined back-up referrals/cases in case the social worker is unable to attend his/her interview?

D. Modifying the PQCR Tools

CalSWEC has collected and posted examples of tools that counties have used in the PQCR process. They are available at <http://calswec.berkeley.edu/CalSWEC/CCFSR1.html>.

CDSS consultants are available to discuss recent tools used by various counties and feedback provided by those counties as well as to collaborate on modifying the tools to meet the unique needs of the county and incorporate information from the literature review. While it is helpful to access the tools used in previous PQCRs, the process of reviewing and refining the tools to meet the specific needs of each county and to incorporate any findings from the literature review is valuable.

Both the case summary and interview tools may be modified as needed to capture the most relevant information related to the selected focus area. The tool can be organized and structured to inform the PQCR final debrief. As a reminder, in order to provide the agreed upon anonymity to the interviewee, the completed interview tool (raw data) will not be provided to the county. Rather, the county will receive all the information in aggregate.

Mock interviews will be conducted with the tools to determine if the questions appropriately get the desired information or if they need to be reworded based upon local practices.

E. Planning for Focus Groups

In addition to the interviews with social workers related to the selected cases, information specific to the focus area should be collected from key stakeholders including host county supervisors, parents, youth, care providers, attorneys, community-based service providers, tribal groups, probation supervisors, social workers, probation officers, courts, judges, etc. Generally, each stakeholder group is afforded its own focus group. The planning team will decide how many and with whom they will conduct the focus groups. Focus groups do not center on specific cases, but the focus area itself.

The focus group is a structured conversation with a facilitator and 6 to, a maximum of, 12 participants. Focus groups typically last from 1½ to 2 hours. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members. Individual participants are not identified in the notes or the PQCR Report to protect the confidentiality of participants and to provide an environment where people can freely talk. The focus group allows key stakeholders to provide valuable insights on current practices and what changes they recommend for systemic and practice changes and for training related to the focus area. An additional

benefit of conducting focus groups is to engage stakeholders in the PQCR, CSA, and ultimately the SIP process.

1. Successful focus groups have highly structured questions, and they need an experienced facilitator and recorder to gather data.
2. The facilitator needs to be a neutral party with good facilitation skills to guide the conversation and gain the information needed. It is important that the facilitator is viewed by the group as a person who does not have power over the participants and who will maintain confidentiality. RTA consultants, for example, may be used to facilitate the process. CDSS consultants also may be available to co-facilitate the focus group.
3. Facilitation of supervisory focus groups is of particular concern. Careful selection of an appropriate facilitator is imperative to ensuring a comfortable environment for this group. Examples of non-neutral situations include: leadership or attendance by any management staff with personnel responsibilities for any participant of a focus group; and leadership or attendance by any staff who has contract responsibility for community partners participating in a focus group.
4. If appropriate and available, a laptop and LCD should be used to gather the data, projecting the notes on to a screen that allows all participants to see what is being recorded. This quickly transcribes accurate information, which the group is able to comment on.
5. In all focus groups, the issue of confidentiality of information should be addressed. Feedback should not be attributed to individuals in the focus groups or interviews.
6. At the conclusion of each focus group the facilitator, co-facilitator and, if appropriate, the focus group participants should identify prominent themes. These themes should be aligned with debriefing themes which emerge after the interviews. This alignment process can take place during the week after the PQCR.
7. Themes or trends are issues that have been experienced or expressed by numerous parties in the focus groups, not one individual. These themes express the broader picture for the agency.
8. Reminder: Host county staff must remain neutral if they are participating. The focus group is not the time to refute or defend county policy, but rather it's a time to gather information.

Focus group participants should be selected based on their ability to represent a specific constituency. The group should be diverse.

It is difficult to conduct a focus group with fewer than six people or more than 12 people. Some considerations:

1. Invite participants early
2. Offer stipends for non-staff members to attend the focus group
3. Conduct the focus group in a comfortable, safe, and logistically accessible location
4. Conduct the focus group at the time that best meets the participants' availability
5. Provide child care when conducting focus groups with biological parents and kin providers (preferably the child care is in the same building, but not the same room as the focus groups)
6. Provide transportation and/or reimbursement for transportation
7. Consider ways to recognize the value of the time participants spend attending the focus group

Consider forming a small planning team with representatives from each of the groups to be interviewed. For example, Parent Partners, Resource Parent Association, Kinship Centers, etc., can be very helpful. Utilize their skills to help decide the best location and time for the focus group and then ask them to personally call and invite the participants. Provide the "inviters" with a script to make the phone calls. It is good to invite participants, to then send a reminder, and finally to call them two days before the focus group to see if any challenges have arisen. The promise of a stipend can improve participation rates.

Note: During the planning phase, schedule all focus groups to be completed prior to the final day of the PQCR.

F. Considerations for PQCR Review Team Members

Involvement as a review team member requires time away from regular duties for all participants and travel/hotel costs for peer county staff. Travel costs and logistics will affect the parameters of the on-site review. Consequently, it is recommended that each on-site review be contained within three to five work days.

Smaller counties may wish to consider a regional approach where neighboring counties conduct their PQCRs together to share in the logistics and planning process. CDSS and RTAs are available to provide technical assistance should a county wish to pursue this option.

G. Considerations for PQCR Interviewees

Being selected as an interviewee can be a stressful task for staff. The county may wish to host a pre-briefing session prior to the PQCR event week to orient staff to the process and introduce the tools that will be used to guide their interview and collect data. A decision should be made during the planning, whether or not to allow staff to review the tool and provide any suggestions to amend the tool to improve clarity. It is suggested to give a limited amount of time (48 hrs.) for staff to respond to and submit suggestions to modify the tool.

This session is also a way for both child welfare and probation administration to respond to questions in one orderly meeting with the same message to all who will be participating. Labor unions have found this type of session helpful for them to explain the PQCR process to their constituency and to offer their support as another avenue for staff to advance county child welfare practice. Case preparation and presentation tips are presented at this session. To take advantage of time, holding mock interviews on the same day and having volunteers participate in the pre-briefing session has worked well in some counties.

For more tips on facilitating the pre-briefing, see the PQCR Facilitation Tools at <http://calswec.berkeley.edu/CalSWEC/CCFSR1.html>.

H. Review Teams: Decision Points for Discussion

During the planning process, decisions should be made regarding the following:

1. Inviting counties with high-performing outcomes to participate on a team
2. The number of team members on each review team
3. Ensuring the team composition is balanced (i.e., peer county social workers/supervisors, peer county Probation officers, community partners, etc.)
4. If possible, peer counties should not send previous employees of the host county to participate in the PQCR without the consent of the host county.

I. Review Teams' Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the review teams may include:

1. Participate in PQCR training and pre-site visit preparation
2. Review the body of research related to the focus area
3. Review cases on-line (as a secondary on CWS/CMS when available) or by using the case summary
4. Review host county CSA and SIP
5. Review interview tools and participate in the testing of the tools prior to PQCR to be comfortable with the interviews.
6. Travel to host county
7. Participate in the PQCR case reviews for specified time (2 to 5 days)
8. Ensure that the interviews remain centered on the focus area
9. Ensure confidentiality of the process
10. Record findings on the PQCR interview and debriefing tools
11. Review completed interview tools for emerging themes and trends for the exit interview
12. Participate in daily debriefing
13. Participate in exit final debrief
14. Provide input and feedback for development of the PQCR Report
15. Share promising practices

J. Review Team Composition

Each review team may consist of 2 to 4 members, depending on county size, and should include the following representatives:

1. Peer county CWS supervisors
2. Experienced peer county social workers
3. Peer county probation officers
4. Peer county probation supervisors
5. Other representatives, such as community stakeholders, service providers, and program analysts, who have expertise in casework practices may be included

The total number of team members will be based on the number of cases (and associated staff) selected for review, the size of the county, and the pool of other neighbor/peer county staff available to serve as reviewers.

Team members should have specific subject matter knowledge to review outcome and practice issues, including experience with child welfare services and/or probation practices, state regulations, and federal requirements. All interviewers are required to sign a statement of confidentiality.

Note: Team composition agreed upon by planning team and co-chairs.

K. Preparing Review Teams

Prepare review teams by compiling all necessary information and materials into a review team packet distributed on the first day of the PQCR. The review team packets may include, but are not limited to, the following materials:

1. Schedule and location of interviews
2. Literature review
3. On-site review tools
4. Contact information, etc.
5. Demographics of the county
6. Pertinent information regarding the agency's organization and structure
7. Confidentiality form
8. Acronym guide

L. Logistics: Decision Points for Discussion

Decision points during the planning process:

1. Where will the interviews/focus groups be conducted?
2. If there are multiple sites for the PQCR event week, who should be the site host at each site? It is recommended that all scheduled events (training, interviews, debrief, etc.) during the PQCR event week be held at one central location that is a neutral location for both CWS and probation.
3. On-site coordinators are necessary to ensure a smooth operation at each interview site (such as arranging alternative interviews when original worker was unable to attend scheduled interview, or assisting teams with lunch arrangements, etc.).
4. On-site coordinators are responsible for ensuring that staff understand what the PQCR is and what to expect from the process.

5. What type of support staff is needed (for photo copies, supplies, lunch arrangements, data entry, etc.)?
6. Who will prepare selected cases (via case summary) for on-site review cases allowing interviewees adequate time to prepare for the interview by providing a copy of the interview tool at least two weeks prior to the scheduled interview?
7. Approximately forty-five (45) minutes per interview seems to be a reasonable timeframe for a thorough interview.
8. Assign support staff as greeters and runners to keep the process moving.
9. Ask people being interviewed to arrive 30 minutes early, to orient them and to make sure the day runs on schedule. It is difficult to catch up if interviews don't start on time.

M. Preparing for Post-PQCR Implementation Activities

Prepare for activities after completion of the interview process by:

1. Anticipating any and all participants involved in the PQCR process to ask: "What happens next? What action is going to be taken as a result of this process? Have we been heard?" All involved in the process, especially those social workers interviewed, want to know about follow up plans.
2. Consider next steps. The biggest challenge is not conducting the PQCR process, but implementing the recommendations.
3. Discuss CSA process, and how the PQCR informs and complements that process, which in turn informs the SIP.
4. Each county has a role in the state's Program Improvement Plan and this should be tied in for staff.

VI. Conducting the On-Site PQCR

A. Schedule

The following is the suggested schedule for conducting the PQCR. Depending on the distance traveled by the peer county reviewers, the training and orientation could occur sometime prior to the actual interviews.

Day	Goal
Day 1	Training/Orientation (Time: 4-6 hours)
Day 2-4	Interviews/Debrief (Average of 3-4 interviews per team per day; this process can take 1 to 3 days)
Day 5	Debrief with interviewers and integration of what was learned. (Time: 2-5 hours; may also include a verbal report to the host county executive management team) This is the time for the peer counties to present what is working well in their counties. This cross-fertilization of best practice is key to the PQCR process.

B. Training/Orientation of the Review Team

The following are the training goals to prepare the review teams:

1. Provide information and instructions to the PQCR teams on the work they will be doing during the week
2. Develop an understanding of and commitment to the purpose and desired outcomes of the PQCR process
3. Review and discuss the literature, specifically as it relates to the interview tools
4. Develop effective working teams
5. Practice the process by conducting mock interviews
6. Train on the debrief process, including how to capture information, etc.
7. Support the exploration of how review team members will establish a welcoming, safe, and non-adversarial environment that encourages social workers to be open and honest in their comments
8. Prepare interviewers to deal with the issue of confidentiality, so that workers and supervisors feel free to speak without fear of retribution

A training guide and supplemental materials can be found at <http://calswec.berkeley.edu/CaISWEC/CCFSR1.html>.

The planning team may decide to prepare and distribute a brief summary of pertinent county policies and procedures for the focus area under review to the review team. This document can be used as a reference during the interviews and/or debriefs, but the review team must be carefully prepared to use it properly.

1. The summary should be used to quickly reference county policy, and it should not figure prominently in the interview.
2. Review teams should be particularly careful to assure that the interview does not appear to be comparing social work practice to the county policy. This may cause innovative approaches by workers to be missed, and could detract from the collaborative atmosphere of the interview.
3. Such summaries are fairly time-intensive to produce, and counties are advised to begin to assemble all of the materials early in the planning process.

C. Interviews/Daily Debriefs

Each team typically conducts 3 to 4 interviews per day over 1 to 3 days. Interviews typically take 45 minutes, with the interview team then taking 15 minutes to debrief the interview and fill out the debrief tool. Each interviewer has a role: interviewer, time keeper, and recorder. The team decides who will fulfill each role, which can rotate during the interviews. For counties where there are only two interviewers, one is the interviewer and the other fulfills the other roles.

The planning team decides the number of interviews and time frames of the interviews.

Sample agendas can be found at <http://calswec.berkeley.edu/CaISWEC/CCFSR1.html>.

The purpose of the daily debrief is to obtain review team feedback on that day's interviews and what they heard from social workers and probation officers regarding the key questions. This information should be summarized in writing and presented to the team responsible for composing the PQCR Report. Daily debriefs also serve to facilitate and frame the final discussions at the end of the 1 - 3 days of interviews. Additionally, any issues or problems with the interview process can be discussed at these daily debriefs. Only interview teams and planning teams participate in daily debriefs.

Sample facilitation tools and formats for daily debriefs can be found at <http://calswec.berkeley.edu/CaISWEC/CCFSR1.html>

D. Focus Groups

There are four parts to a typical focus group:

1. Introductions and logistics (8 min)
2. Facilitator to state the issue and why people are gathered here (10 min)
3. Questions that guide the conversations (60-90 min depending on timeframe chosen by the county)
4. If appropriate, depending on the participants, review prominent themes of the session (10 min)
5. Restate what the focus group notes will be used for and thank the participants (8 min)

For more suggestions to assist with facilitating focus groups, see the PQCR Facilitation Tools at <http://calswec.berkeley.edu/CalSWEC/CCFSR1.html>.

E. Final Debrief/Reflections

Following the 1 to 3 days of interviews, the review teams are reconvened to share the results of their interviews. The final debrief is used to synthesize the results of the individual interviews into overall themes. At this time, the insights from each of the daily debriefs can be presented or summarized. From the daily debriefs, recurring themes can be identified, and an overall summary can be presented to the team writing the PQCR Report.

It is helpful for the facilitator to acknowledge that the review teams need to speak from the following two perspectives:

1. Sharing what they heard from the social workers they interviewed and being their “voice”; and
2. Speaking from their own experience and perspective, including their reaction to what they heard.

Review team members initially may be asked to give objective information and not to interpret or include their opinions and observations in the responses. Time can be allocated later in the final debrief for more analytical and interpretive discussions.

Note: The final debrief is essential to the accurate collection of all of the rich information gathered throughout the PQCR week. The themes and recommendations need to be carefully delineated to inform the PQCR Report. If this is done correctly, the debrief process will clearly outline the salient points designed to be captured in the final summary report. Please see the PQCR Facilitation Tools for more tips and suggestions regarding this process (see link below).

Some counties schedule a meeting with the executive management team prior to the final debrief/reflections session. This allows them to prepare for and support the reflections session, and gives them a preliminary glance of the PQCR findings.

The reflections session presents the findings to the PQCR team and allows for cross-fertilization of best practices. The peer counties present what is working well in their counties that may benefit the host county.

The PQCR Facilitation Tools (with suggestions for facilitating the final debrief) are available at <http://calswec.berkeley.edu/CalSWEC/CCFSR1.html>.

VII. Post-PQCR Implementation Activities

A. Executive and Management Debriefing

Some counties schedule a debrief for the agency director and managers on the process and the major findings of the PQCR. This allows them to prepare for and support the PQCR final debrief.

B. PQCR Reflections Session

After the completion of the PQCR, it is helpful to facilitate a meeting to review the process; capturing what worked well, what to do differently next time and planning the next steps toward the CSA and SIP.

The PQCR reflections session is also an opportunity to recognize and thank all the people who contributed to the success of the PQCR process. Those invited to the reflections session include support staff that helped plan the reviews, interviewees, review team members, planning team members, and management staff.

This is also a good opportunity to present the findings to the group, as possibly an Executive Summary of the report.

Additional facilitation tools for the PQCR reflections session can be found at <http://calswec.berkeley.edu/CalSWEC/CCFSR1.html>.

C. Preparing the Report

The PQCR Report is intended to guide practice in the host county. It is a vehicle to share the insights of the PQCR and to relay a summary of what the PQCR team discovered about practice.

After incorporating the feedback from the planning team on the PQCR Report, the host county will send a ***draft*** of the report to the CDSS consultant 30 days after the PQCR is completed, in order to work together to ensure all components are addressed. This allows for increased collaboration and partnership. CDSS will comment on the draft and return it to the county within ten business days, for final host county director approval and submission to CDSS by the due date identified in the triennial cycle (ACIN I-46-07).

Consistent with the overall philosophy of the PQCR, it is a good approach to begin with the strong practices that emerged from the interviews. Make sure

to identify the practice strengths that are specific to the focus area, and emphasize any emerging promising practices that were discovered or about which more information is needed. Areas needing improvement should also be noted, as applicable, under each category.

1. Introduction

This portion of the report sets the stage. It should do the following:

- a. Briefly explain the general purpose of the PQCR process, and how it fits within the larger California Outcomes and Accountability System
- b. Explain why the focus area was chosen for CWS
- c. Explain why the focus area was chosen for probation

2. Methodology

This section specifies the process that was used in the county, since the PQCR process and methods may vary depending on focus area, county size, etc. In this section:

- a. Define the process used to get the information for the PQCR Report. Include how the focus area was identified
- b. Include summary of data trends related to focus area—PQCR-related research—CWS and Probation
- c. Explain briefly the method used to select the referrals/cases for the PQCR
- d. Explain the review tools that were used. Blank copies of the tools can be attached as an Appendix
- e. Delineate the specifics about the process used for the review, including (as applicable):
 1. Extent of case review that was completed prior to the interviews
 2. Social worker, probation officer, and supervisor interviews
 3. Focus groups
- f. Briefly explain any unique county issues that made the PQCR distinct. This might include differences based on county size, etc.

3. Summary of Practice

This section is the heart of the PQCR Report that speaks to specific practices that were discovered as part of the process.

The text should follow the debrief tool and it should list the trends and information which have emerged through the interviews and focus groups within the following categories:

- a. Documentation
 - b. Strengths and Promising Practices
 - c. Barriers and Challenges
 - d. Training Needs
 - e. State Technical Assistance
 - f. Policy and Systemic Issues
 - g. Resource Issues
4. Summary Observations and Recommendations
- This section should include an overall summary of the major discoveries of the PQCR with a list of specific recommendations resulting from the PQCR. Recommendations about areas for future exploration can be noted, as well as any proposed changes to the SIP that might be made at the annual review.
5. Executive Summary
- This section is optional and should include a condensed summary of the major discoveries of the PQCR with a list of specific recommendations resulting from the PQCR. The Executive Summary can be used to share with community partners and staff and can provide an at-a-glance picture of the entire process.

Sample PQCR Reports can be found at
<http://calswec.berkeley.edu/CalSWEC/CCFSR1.html>.

D. Host County Follow-Up

In the efforts to plan for a smooth and effective PQCR process, it is important not to lose sight of crucial follow-up activities. Remember the following throughout the planning and implementation process:

1. The PQCR generates a great deal of qualitative information about practice, both related and unrelated to the focus area that was chosen.
2. Develop a format to provide feedback to county staff about the process and findings, especially those who participated in the PQCR process and those that heard about it.
3. One way to organize the information that was gathered is to categorize it as either Focus Area-Related or Non-Focus Area-Related / System-wide. System-wide issues can then be addressed by the management

- team, while focus area-related issues can be addressed by the appropriate segment of the organization.
4. While it is important to follow up on important pieces of information that are not related to the focus area, you may want to inform staff that changes related to the focus area will have priority.
 5. Once the top themes or findings of the PQCR are identified by the PQCR team, they can be communicated, along with follow-up activities related to the findings, to the supervisory, management, and line staff who did not participate in the reviews.
 6. Be sure to communicate the strengths that were identified as part of the PQCR, as well as the areas for improvement.
 7. Some counties integrate their communication and follow-up to the PQCR into the structure that they already have in place to follow up on activities discovered as part of the CSA process and included in the SIP.
 8. Since the PQCR is one of the components of the larger California Child Welfare Services Outcome and Accountability System, information gleaned from the PQCR should:
 - a. Inform the CSA and SIP processes
 - b. Be communicated to the team working on the next (and possibly the previous) CSA

VIII. Additional Information and Resources

A. Resources

An overview of the PQCR process, samples of the tools and PQCR requirements are found in the following All County Information Notice and All County Letter:

1. Triennial cycle letter (All County Information Notice: I-46-07)
2. Information regarding Implementation of Peer Quality Case Review (All County Information Notice 1-12-05)
3. Implementation of Child Welfare Services Outcome and Accountability System (All County Letter 04-05)
4. PQCR allocation 07/08 (County Fiscal Letter 07/08)

In addition to the above, CDSS County Data Reports, County Self-Assessments, and County System Improvement Plans can also be found on the CDSS Web site, <http://www.childsworld.ca.gov>.

The following additional resources may also be useful:

- California Department of Social Services – Outcomes & Accountability System
<http://www.childsworld.ca.gov/PG1356.htm>
- California Department of Social Services – Main Page
<http://www.cdss.ca.gov/cdssweb/default.htm>
- The Children’s Research Center
http://www.nccd-crc.org/crc/c_index_main.html
 - SafeMeasures®
 - Structured Decision Making
- Child Welfare Research Center
<http://cssr.berkeley.edu/childwelfare/>
- CalSWEC (General)
<http://calswec.berkeley.edu/>
- CalSWEC (AB 636)
<http://calswec.berkeley.edu/CalSWEC/CCFSR1.html>
- Regional Training Academies (via CalSWEC’s website)
http://calswec.berkeley.edu/CalSWEC/2001RTA_FAQ4.html

B. State Contact

Children and Family Services Division, Outcomes and Accountability Bureau:

- Management and Consultants' Main Number (916) 651-8099
- E-mail address chldserv@dss.ca.gov

IX. PQCR Glossary

Term	Definition
AB 636	Effective, January 2004, the Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act of 2001 (AB 636, Steinberg). Identifies and replicates best practices to improve child welfare service (CWS) outcomes through county-level review processes. Also referred to as California – Child and Family Service Review (C-CFSR).
CA Outcome and Accountability System	A California legislatively created system, focusing primarily on measuring outcomes in the areas of safety, permanence and child and family well-being. The new system operates on a philosophy of continuous quality improvement, interagency partnerships, community involvement, and public reporting of child welfare program outcomes.
Case Summary Tool	A focus area specific instrument to assist Host County in determining the most appropriate cases to obtain relevant information to inform practice. This tool can also double as a prep document for review team members.
PQCR Methodology	This section of the Final PQCR Report specifies the process that was used in the Host County to determine, focus area, case selection, peer county selection, review team composition, etc.
C-CFSR	California Child and Family Services Review: See AB 636
CDSS	California Department of Social Services. One of the co-hosts and partners for every PQCR process.
County Data Report	The County Data Report is a compilation of data provided by CDSS and is the basis of the County Self-Assessment. The Report includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Welfare Participation Rates (i.e., rate per 1000 children, e.g., referrals, foster care entries, placement type, etc.) • Outcome Indicators • Process Measures • Caseload Demographics

Term	Definition
County Self Assessment (CSA)	A key component of the C-CFSR, the County Self-Assessment (CSA) is driven by a focused analysis of child welfare data. Each county, in partnership with its community and prevention partners, examines its strengths and needs from prevention through the continuum of care, including reviews of procedural and systemic practices, current levels of performance, and available resources.
Daily Debrief	The purpose of the daily debrief is to obtain review team feedback on that day's interviews and what themes or trends could be identified. The information should be summarized in writing and presented to the team responsible for composing the PQCR Final Report.
Debrief Tool	The instrument and documentation method for gathering information from each individual interview and then subsequently at the end of each day of interviews. The debrief tool identifies the 7 (seven) systemic factors.
Evidence-Based Programs and Practice	Evidence-based programs and practices (EBP) is an approach to social work practice that includes the process of combining research knowledge; professional/clinical expertise; and client and community values, preferences and circumstances. It is a dynamic process whereby practitioners continually seek, interpret, use, and evaluate the best available information in an effort to make the best practice decisions in social work. Valuable evidence may be derived from many sources – ranging from systematic reviews and meta-analysis (highest level of evidence) to less rigorous research designs (lower level of evidence).
executive management team	The host county executive management team, usually consists of executive leadership such as Chief Probation Officers, Child Welfare Directors, Deputies and/or Managers and CDSS, and oversees the planning of the PQCR.
Final Debrief/Reflections Session	The Final Debrief, typically held at the end of the last day of interviews, is used to synthesize the results of the individual interviews into overall themes. At this time, the insights from each of the daily debriefs can be presented or summarized. The final debrief session can be combined with the Reflections Session.

Term	Definition
Focus Area	One high priority outcome areas that can be explored during the PQCR process; however, only one focus area should be selected. The focus area is selected after a review of quarterly report data and consultation with CDSS.
Focus Groups	One vehicle for gathering relevant information to the focus area from key stakeholders. A structured conversation with a facilitator and six to, a maximum of, twelve participants. One group typically last from 1-2 hours.
Host County	The County of interest and is the responsible party for carrying out the responsibilities of the PQCR.
Interview/Focus Group Tool	The instrument used as an aide to guide discussion and gather pertinent information during both the case review interview as well as during focus groups. Questions are modified to meeting specific county needs as well as to gleam to most information relevant to the focus area.
Mock Interviews	This is a preliminary dry run of the interview process to review the interview tool, the timing of the interview and any other logistics. This is a crucial process in assuring a smooth event week.
On-site Review	Also known as event week, is the actual week the case review interviews are held.
Peer County	Peer County's are identified in the planning process to assist the Host County in carrying out the PQCR. The Peer County is selected and seen as a primary resource in assisting the Host County identify strengths and promising practices as well as challenges in practice relevant to the focus area selected. Typically, the Peer County is high performing or has some identified promising practices related to the focus area.
Peer Quality Case Reviews (PQCR)	A key component of the C-CFSR designed to enrich and deepen understanding of a county's actual practices in the field by bringing experienced peers from neighboring counties to assess and help shed light on the subject county's strengths and areas in need of improvement within the CWS delivery system and social work practice shed light on the subject county's strengths and areas in need of improvement within the CWS delivery system and social work practice.
Performance Indicators	Specific, measurable data points used in combination to gauge progress in relation to established outcomes.

Term	Definition
Permanence	A primary outcome for CWS whereby all children and youth have stable and nurturing legal relationships with adult caregivers that create a shared sense of belonging and emotional security enduring over time.
PQCR Reflections Session	A meeting typically held 60 days after the PQCR event week to thank and recognize all who contributed to the success of the PQCR; present PQCR report and begin the process of identifying potential next steps for the Host County.
PQCR Co-Chair	The PQCR involves three co-chairs as partners in the process: Host County Child Welfare, Host County Probation and CDSS.
PQCR Final Report	This report outlines and summarizes the entire PQCR process, from focus area determination through the summary of PQCR findings. This report is intended to help guide the Host County in the improvement of practice. The report is to be submitted to CDSS in final 60 days after the event week.
PQCR Orientation	A meeting held to provide general information for all PQCR participants and community partners about the Host County focus area and process for gathering information.
PQCR Training	A session held typically the first day of the event week, to provide the schedule and roles/tasks for the week; local area information, review of interview tools, and for all to gain a common understanding of the week ahead.
PQCR planning team	The PQCR planning team assures that all of the elements of the PQCR are completed. Membership varies from County to County, but typically includes representatives from Child Welfare, Probation, CDSS, peer count(y)ies, RTA, youth, resource families, and other key stakeholders important or specific to the focus area selected.
Program Improvement Plan (PIP) (Federal)	A comprehensive response to findings of the CFSR establishing specific strategies and benchmarks for upgrading performance in California in all areas of nonconformity with established indicators.
Resource Families	Relative caregivers, licensed foster parents, and adoptive parents who meet the needs of children who cannot safely remain at home. Resource families participate as members of the multidisciplinary team.
RTA	Regional Training Academy; California's statewide mechanism for in-service training and continuing professional education of public child welfare staff.

Term	Definition
Safety	A primary outcome for CWS whereby all children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.
System Improvement Plan (SIP)	A key component of the C-CFSR, this operational agreement between the County and the state outlines a county's strategy and action to improve outcomes for children and families.
Triennial Cycle	The three year cycle for the CA Outcomes and Accountability System. See AB 636. A triennial cycle for the 58 counties with proposed dates for scheduled PQCRs and other components of the California Children and Family Services Review System (C-CFSR) are found in the appendices (All County Information Notice: I-46-07).
Well-Being (Child)	A primary outcome for CWS focuses on how effectively the developmental, behavioral, cultural and physical needs of children are met.
Well-Being (Family)	A primary outcome for California's CWS whereby families demonstrate self-sufficiency and the ability to adequately meet basic family needs (e.g., safety, food, clothing, housing, health care, financial, emotional, and social support) and provide age appropriate supervision and nurturing of their children.

X. Acronym Guide

Acronym	
AB 636	Assembly Bill 636
ACIN	All County Information Notice
ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
BOS	Board of Supervisors
CalSWEC	California Social Work Education Center
Cal WORKs	California Work Opportunities and Responsibility to Kids
CAPC	Child Abuse Prevention Coordinating Council
CAPIT	Child Abuse Prevention Intervention and Treatment Program
CBCAP	Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Program
C-CFSR	California Child and Family Services Review
CCTF	County Children's Trust Fund
CDSS	California Department of Social Services
CSA	County Self Assessment
CSOAB	Children's Services Outcomes and Accountability Bureau
CSSR	Center for Social Services Research

Acronym	
CWDA	County Welfare Directors Association of California
DDS	Department Developmental Services
MIS	Management Information System
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
OCAP	Office of Child Abuse Prevention
OCAP – PND	Office of Child Abuse Prevention – Prevention Network Development
PQCR	Peer Quality Case Review
Pdf	Portable Document Format
PSSF	Promoting Safe and Stable Families
RTA	Regional Training Academy
SIP	System Improvement Plan
TILP	Transitional Independent Learning Plan
TPR	Termination of Parental Rights
URL	Uniform Resource Locator